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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY Poland

DATE DISTR. 21 Jan, 1955

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Medical and Social Service

1. Most Poles were pleased with one facet of socialized medicine, namely that hospitalization and treatment were free. However, this positive aspect was negated by the fact that the medical service was burdened with bureaucracy, general disregard of the individual, and the utter confusion inherent in the system. Dispensaries serving adults were viewed with dislike by most people, [redacted] mainly because visitors had to wait one, two, or even three days before being admitted; even then the doctors made only cursory examinations owing to the large number of patients.
2. Another source of complaints concerning the medical service was the fact that the people were not permitted to select their own doctors; they were required to be treated by the local doctor. If a person suddenly became seriously ill at home, an ambulance was called and first aid administered. In most cases, it was useless to call the local doctor because he would not arrive for a day or two. Since hospital space was scarce, generally only those patients who were recommended by the doctor for hospitalization were admitted to a hospital. The medical service in Poland was so poor [redacted] that people feared sickness. A popular saying was, "one has to be very healthy and strong to be sick in Poland".
3. Every city and larger town in Poland maintains consultative clinics for mothers known as the "Mother and Child" dispensaries. [redacted] operation of one of these dispensaries in [redacted] Opole [redacted] young [redacted] source [redacted] three [redacted] A specialist doctor and an experienced nurse were on duty at all times. [redacted] impressed with the sanitary conditions there and with the relatively high quality of care and service rendered. [redacted]

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- 50X1 never waited more than 15 minutes [redacted] in larger towns the waiting period is much longer, from one to two or more hours.
4. According to law, a working woman who was pregnant was entitled to three months' leave, six weeks pre- and six weeks postnatal care. However, most women continued to work to the very last day and took their three-month leave after bearing the child. In addition, they were entitled to one month's ordinary sick leave. Any leave taken over the four-month period was unpaid. If a mother returned to work because she could not afford this unpaid time off, she might place her child in a creche. The creches were compelled to accept the children of working mothers. The creches as well as the kindergartens were obliged to take children of non-working mothers only if the mother were sick or if another member of the family was suffering from an infectious disease.
5. Creches were located at factories and at large institutions; one or two creches were also found in each residential district. It was possible to board the children at the nurseries on a day-to-day basis, the mother delivering the child to the nursery in the morning before going to work and calling for it after work, or on a weekly basis, taking the child home only on Sundays. [redacted] the cost of maintaining a child at a creche amounted to about 50 zloty a month. People in dire circumstances were not compelled to pay anything.
6. [redacted] most worker-class mothers were satisfied with the over-all conditions existing in the creches in the larger cities. Care and attention were adequate and the food was relatively plentiful and nourishing. The creche at the Pruszkow Hospital [redacted] maintained a qualified staff consisting of a pediatrician, a children's nurse, and several experienced nursemaids.
7. Generally speaking, conditions at the creches in the smaller provincial towns were much less satisfactory. They lacked the necessary facilities and, because their staffs were usually not fully qualified, the care and attention were inadequate. However, the quantity and quality of food in these smaller creches compared favorably with that served in the creches in the cities. Most of the children in these nurseries were those of mothers who were engaged in strenuous physical work. The majority of the mothers in the white-collar class and the intelligentsia did not take their children to the creches. They either stopped working for one or two years, hired a nursemaid, or had their own mothers take care of their children.
8. [redacted] Although [redacted] the children were well attended at the creches, they preferred to keep them at home where they would receive the mother's personal attention and loving care. These same mothers, however, had no qualms about sending their children to kindergartens.
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9. [redacted] the VOA and BBC were performing creditable, praise-worthy and effective work in broadcasting to the Poles, the overwhelming majority of whom welcome these broadcasts. Proof of the wide popularity enjoyed by these stations lies in the fact that reports broadcast by them are repeated soon afterwards by people who do not even have radios. Western radios perform an excellent service in that they keep the hopes of the Polish people alive and maintain their will to resist, even though passively for the present.

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10. [redacted] most Poles harbor the unrealistic conception that the West is a land of milk and honey, a paradise where all the comforts of life can be had merely for the asking. Only an insignificant number of Poles believe the regime's propaganda about the alleged miserable conditions in the United States. [redacted] Westerners cannot imagine the extent to which the Poles view the West as an ideal place with many freedoms.

11. [redacted] listened as often as possible to the 3:00 P.M. newscast of RFE [redacted] in Warsaw. Frequently [redacted] not able to tune that station in because of the strong jamming. Jamming was likewise bad on VOA programs received in Warsaw. One of the reasons for poor reception [redacted] was the fact that their pre-war German radio was worn out and weak.

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[redacted] in Opole in 1952, Jamming was almost non-existent [redacted] preferred to listen to RFE because it offered a continuous program; the 8:30 P.M. broadcast of VOA.

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Religion

15. [redacted] the position of the Catholic church in Poland is not entirely hopeless. It has suffered some very severe setbacks during the past few years but most of these involved restrictions on the church's political activity. The church [redacted] continues to conduct religious services in comparative freedom. Despite the arrests of some of the church's leaders and despite the restrictions imposed by the regime, the church still exerts a tremendous influence on the people.

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16. The compromise made by the "priest-patriots" and certain lay Catholic activists with the regime may be strongly condemned by most Polish Catholics. [redacted] however, [redacted] the action of these compromising groups [redacted] spared the church from further bitter attacks by the regime and from possible annihilation in Poland. [redacted] one dangerous aspect of this compromise is the possibility that it might lead to other compromises by Catholic teachers, doctors, and others who are in influential positions.

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17. [redacted] one interesting feature regarding the caliber of men entering the priesthood in Poland today. During this period of political persecution and resulting economic insecurity only those with a genuine calling, and true Poles as well, are entering the service of the church. These men are martyrs, full of selfless devotion, who will maintain the spirit of religion among the Poles and will keep the church united and strong.

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Status of Polish Women

18. [redacted] the status of women in Poland today is considerably different from what it was before the war. During the war, because of the shortage of men, the women were compelled to seek outside employment in order to support their families. They grew to be self-reliant and, in a sense, economically independent. After the war they continued to work and even began to compete with men in professions and occupations which before the war were accessible only to men. They were gradually acquiring equal rights and privileges. The equality granted to women by the October 1952 constitution was merely a written confirmation of what already existed.
19. This feeling of equality and the desire for economic independence were most prevalent among the young women, both married and single, of the skilled and professional classes. Most of the women under 30 [redacted] considered it fashionable to be employed and to enter upon a professional career.
20. The composition of the student body in some of the faculties at Warsaw universities during the 1953-1954 school year may be quite illustrative of the new status of Polish women. [redacted] the number of men and women in the agricultural and architectural faculties was equally divided. Sixty per cent of the medical, 60% of the interior decorating and 80% of the philological faculty were women. Even the mechanical engineering faculty contained about 35% women.
21. [redacted] an example of the attitude of the young married Polish woman of [redacted] social standing. [redacted] trained to be a good wife, cook, and housekeeper [redacted] preparing herself for married life. The idea of learning a trade or profession was out of the question before the war. On the other hand, postwar conditions at home prevented [redacted] pursuing a profession. [redacted] at the Psychiatric Clinic [redacted] eight of the ten doctors were women, all postwar graduates, whose average age was 28.
22. [redacted] the desire for independence prevalent among the young women of the middle class was not evident among the young women of the worker and peasant classes, nor did the older married women, regardless of social class, appear to be affected by the by the postwar acquisition of equality. Most of them viewed marriage as their most important career. They preferred to remain at home and raise a family; but, because of the high cost of living and their husbands' meager earnings, they were often compelled to work. Moreover, many of them sought escape from their crowded living quarters, which were drab and unpleasant. [redacted] the attitude of the young women of the middle class toward their new social and economic gains undergoes a change after marriage. Most of them [redacted] would like to forego their professional careers completely and remain at home. However, they too continue to work after marriage because of economic necessity.

Political Attitudes

23. An anti-Soviet attitude was [redacted] always pronounced among the Poles. Hence, they were bitterly disappointed at the end of the war to have in their midst the Soviets, who now proclaimed themselves Poland's "liberators". This intense dislike of the Soviets has not abated in the least. In fact, it has become stronger due to the fact that the Soviets have foisted their rule on Poland. Finding themselves powerless [redacted] the Poles

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have adjusted themselves as best they can and have adopted an attitude of passive resistance, hoping that one day the West, specifically the United States, will come to their aid.

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24. [redacted] the United States can prevent the spread of Soviet power only by means of a war. The source of the trouble, Soviet Communism, must be wiped out. The application of methods short of war will not be effective. [redacted]
[redacted] War, she said, should be waged soon, as time is playing into the hands of the Soviets.

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25. [redacted] the Soviets strive for the political and spiritual extermination of Poland, whereas the Germans tried biological extermination. It is difficult [redacted] to state which of the two methods of domination is hated more by the Poles. Not more than 10% of the Polish population would vote for the present regime in a free and secret election. An overwhelming majority of the peasant class, over 85% of the working class, and perhaps 95% of the prewar intelligentsia would vote against it. [redacted] On the other hand, 40 to 50% of the post-war intelligentsia, stemming from the peasant and worker classes, would vote in favor of it.

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26.

[redacted]
[redacted] if the church is permitted to function as freely as it does at present, it can continue to exert its influence against Communism, thereby preventing many young people from becoming ardent Communists.

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27. Parents are faced with the problem of instilling an anti-regime, anti-Communist attitude in their children and at the same time trying to prepare them for careers in a system which does not tolerate resistance or opposition in any form. There is the unpleasant possibility that these children might be cast aside by the regime if they do not learn to conform and will not join the ZMP (Polish Youth Association) and other similar organizations. The burning question for parents at present is whether they tell their children the truth and teach them to resist the regime or instruct them to conform outwardly but resist inwardly. It is a constant struggle between survival and a sense of morality.

28. Another important factor to be considered in a discussion of Poland's future is whether the standard of living will be improved. Industrialization is progressing rapidly and new jobs are being created, but wages remain unchanged and food and consumer goods are becoming increasingly more scarce and expensive. [redacted]
all indications point to a lowered standard of living and, hence, increased dissatisfaction among the Poles.

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Economic Conditions

29. [redacted] the standard of living in Poland has been steadily declining since 1949, when the state began assuming control of all trade, commerce, and industry. Between 1946 and the end of 1949, the standard of living was relatively high and most Poles were quite satisfied. It was then possible for a person to be in government employ and simultaneously to engage in homecraft or some small private enterprise which would bring him additional revenue. His income was then more than adequate, and food and clothing were readily available and relatively inexpensive.

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30. Late in 1949 or early 1950, the gradual liquidation of private enterprise began. Scarcity of consumer items became more and more evident; prices started to rise. The introduction of rationing and the currency reform in October 1950 also had a disastrous effect upon living conditions. [redacted] the rationing period extending from late 1950 to January 1953 was one of deprivation, extreme hardship, and suffering. A two-price system was in effect, the state price and the free or black-market price. It was true that prices at the state stores were much lower. This advantage was offset by many disadvantages, such as, the increased shortages of all types of consumer items, the insufficient rations, and the necessity of standing in queues. Most people were compelled to shop at bazaars and on the free market where the prices were more than double those in the state stores.

31. With the elimination of rationing, more food and many items needed for daily use appeared on the market. Simultaneously, however, food prices rose between 100 and 200%, and the prices of consumer goods rose about 500%. [redacted] within the past year prices had dropped on most items, especially consumer goods. Unfortunately, the price reductions seemed always to be accompanied by an increased scarcity of the items.

32. [redacted] several examples illustrating the differences in the value of Polish currency between 1948 and early 1954. In 1948, [redacted] salary was 25,000 zloty per month, [redacted] able to buy a length of suiting material for 8,000 zloty. After the currency reform and throughout the rationing period from October 1950 to January 1953, [redacted] able to purchase the same type of material for 1,000 zloty, while [redacted] salary had been reduced to 750 zloty per month. In 1954, when [redacted] earning 950 zloty a month, the state stores sold this material, when available, at 500 zloty.

General Attitudes

33. One source of constant complaint among the Poles is the fact that many of their off-duty hours are occupied with compulsory attendance at various functions and meetings organized either by the trade union, the Party, or the state. Among these meetings were the weekly press reviews conducted about half an hour before the start of a given workday; mass meetings held in conjunction with special national or international events; rallies (akademje) held on the eve of all national holidays; the three to six-month vocational training courses with classes scheduled after working hours several times per week; and the weekly political indoctrination classes, at which attendance was compulsory for both Party and non-Party people.

34. The trade union also infringed upon the free time of its members. Besides the regularly scheduled quarterly meetings, the trade union organized assemblies on the eve of all national holidays. At each of these meetings new work commitments were made both by the union as a whole and by the individual members. [redacted] when quarterly and pre-holiday meetings coincided, two sets of commitments were undertaken. Among some of the commitments [redacted] made repeatedly at the Pruszkow Hospital were those to clean up and beautify the hospital grounds and gardens; to maintain cleanliness in the wards; to increase care of the patients; to have doctors devote extra time to the training of nurses and other help; and to perform work to save the hospital the expense of hiring outside help, such as digging ditches for telephone cables, et cetera.

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35. The attitude of most Poles toward government propaganda on the internal situation was strongly negative. They criticized the fact that the state's appraisal of conditions in Poland had nothing in common with reality. For instance, the state described the conditions at the Pruszkow Hospital as being excellent; whereas [redacted] the hospital was actually in need of major repairs, suffered from a shortage of water at times, and lacked bed linen, beds, and many of the simplest instruments. The hospital was understaffed, and many of the nurses and ward attendants were not fully qualified. The situation was also aggravated by the fact that, because of the housing shortage in the town, many of the hospital's rooms were used for housing the staff.
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36. Summing up, [redacted] the following [redacted] among the most unpopular policies and programs in Poland:
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- a. Collectivization of agriculture.
 - b. Liquidation of private enterprise.
 - c. Pressure put upon the church.
 - d. Liquidation of convent schools.
 - e. Almost complete isolation from Western culture.
 - f. Press and radio censorship.
 - g. The foisting of everything Soviet on the Poles.
 - h. Fear of oppression.
 - i. Fear of arrest by the UB.

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